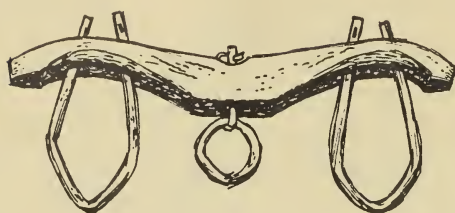


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A Few Facts Citizens
of Illinois Should Know about
the Famous A. Lincoln Collec-
tion of Oliver R. Barrett.

LINCOLN ROOM



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
LIBRARY

MEMORIAL
THE CLASS OF 1901
founded by
THE HORNERS

*A Few Facts
Citizens of Illinois
Should Know
About the Famous*

**ABRAHAM LINCOLN
HISTORICAL COLLECTION**

*of
Oliver R. Barrett*



*Lincoln Historical Fund Campaign
Organized to save the Barrett Lincoln
Collection for Illinois and the Nation*

On January 22, 1889, ex-President Rutherford B. Hayes received a letter from a fifteen-year-old boy living in Pittsfield, Illinois. It read:

"To the person to whom this letter is addressed:

"Dear Sir or Madam, etc.:

"I enclose you a portion of my autograph book and would be very much obliged if you would sign your name on one page and then addressing an envelope to the next person after you on the opposite page, enclosing this letter and the book. If you will, you will greatly oblige

Your obedient servant,

Oliver Barrett"

Mr. Hayes must have smiled to himself as he read this audacious request to a former President from a boy he never knew. But he was intrigued, for as he commented in his diary, "All sorts of droll requests reach me." At any rate, he immediately wrote "With best wishes" and "passed by Mr. and Mrs. Hayes to Miss Frances E. Willard, with kindest regards."

Thus began a strange and wonderful story of American ingenuity—a story that, while it centered most of the time around one individual, today has come to have a particular meaning to every resident of Illinois.

For young Oliver Barrett, with boyish enthusiasm, embarked on a familiar youthful project, that of collecting autographs. But his collection grew and grew—beyond the most exaggerated dreams of boys of that day and even of today—until now, more than sixty years later, the Oliver R. Barrett collection is regarded as one of the greatest collections of autographic material ever assembled by an American; it includes the largest collection of Lincoln autographs, manuscripts, etc., ever assembled by an individual, not to mention other items, such as paintings, photographs, and relics relating to the life of the sixteenth President.

Barrett was born in Jacksonville, Illinois, and at an early age he and his family moved to Pittsfield, county seat of Pike County, and a community where the Lincoln traditions and spirit were very much alive. This is the town where both John G. Nicolay and John Hay, Lincoln's secretaries, came from. Of course, this not only inspired young Barrett to undertake his autograph collection project, but at first it was reasonably simple for him to obtain the autographs he desired.

At any rate, then and later, when he moved to Peoria and to Chicago to distinguish himself as an attorney, Mr. Barrett devoted a great deal of time and money to his hobby. But he was rewarded time and time again when Lincoln scholars came to him

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Lincoln Room

before his death last March to seek information. For, as Poet-Biographer Carl Sandburg has said in his recent book, *Lincoln Collector: The Story of the Oliver R. Barrett Lincoln Collection*, "A mass of source materials wherein are many items that would have probably been lost for historical purposes but for the sagacity and method by which they were sought out." Benjamin P. Thomas, the author of *Portrait for Posterity*, says, "The Barrett collection is so full and basic that a pretty good life of Lincoln could be written from it alone, whereas no present-day life could be written without it."

There are priceless items in the collection—such as the spun gold watch chain which appears in the most famous of all Lincoln photographs, the portrait by Mathew B. Brady on February 9, 1864, the same portrait which appears on the present \$5 bill. There is also Lincoln's own scrapbook from which the printers set up the book edition of the Lincoln-Douglas debates; and there is the earliest known autograph of Lincoln found on a page in his boyhood home-made arithmetic book.

Lincoln authorities, rare book and manuscript dealers have proclaimed this the finest private collection ever assembled and of extraordinary value. If the collection is not purchased by the citizens of Illinois it may be broken up and sold by items.

But everyone agrees that this would be a literary and historical tragedy. The value would be destroyed in large measure if it were necessary to disperse it among bidders at an auction.

Thus, it can be readily seen that the people of Illinois have been offered a bargain by the decision of the Barrett estate to sell this collection to the Barrett Lincoln Collection Fund, a not-for-profit organization, for \$220,000. The collection would then be given to the Illinois State Historical Library at Springfield.

Citizens, statesmen, businessmen, scholars, and authors, aware of the importance of keeping this collection of Lincolniana in Lincoln's state, have joined in trying to raise the necessary money. It was Mr. Barrett's desire that his collection never leave the state, but it was his wish that no special legislation be enacted for its purchase. Thus the not-for-profit corporation was created to receive contributions, purchase the collection, and give it to the Historical Library.

Already, newspapers throughout the state and elsewhere have urged that Illinois residents join in this unified effort to make certain that these invaluable papers stay in Lincoln's and Barrett's state.

"These papers would serve a far more significant memorial to Abraham Lincoln than any monument of marble and brass."

Illinois State Register

"Springfield, close to the log cabin of New Salem, the community from which Lincoln went to the White House, can appropriately be the national center of Lincoln study . . . It is the one most suitable place for the preservation intact of the collection to which Oliver Barrett devoted so much of a life lived in Lincoln's own shadow."

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"This noble monument to our state's greatest son should be kept in Illinois as an inspiration to American patriotism."

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Alfred W. Stern, Chicago

Benjamin P. Thomas, Springfield

Scerial Thompson, Harrisburg

Those desiring to make larger gifts or to make pledges may do so by sending their checks or pledges to:

Barrett Lincoln Collection Fund

c/o Springfield Marine Bank

Springfield, Illinois

Lincoln Historical Fund Campaign

160 North LaSalle Street, Chicago 1, Illinois

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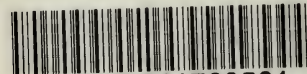
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